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NSC FOR ABRAMS/WERNER/DORAN/SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/23/2016  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LE](#)  
SUBJECT: MGLE01: S/CT CRUMPTON MEETING WITH INTERIOR  
MINISTER FATFAT

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In a May 23 meeting, Acting Interior Minister Ahmad Fatfat, accompanied by Internal Security Forces Director General Ashraf Rifi, told Counterterrorism Coordinator Crumpton, the Ambassador, and emboff that his highest priority regarding counterterrorism in Lebanon was reconstructing the Internal Security Forces (ISF) through training and equipment. Citing political difficulties, he dismissed S/CT Crumpton's suggestion of forming a Lebanese intelligence entity at the policy level as not needed. Fatfat said the GOL received the bulk of its regional intelligence from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Fatfat also predicted that if Hamas fails it was will replaced by something worse. Regarding reports of Sunni unrest in the north, Fatfat said the conditions are there but not the mind-set for extremism. End summary.

¶2. (S) Ambassador Crumpton opened the meeting by asking Fatfat what was his biggest concern is regarding counterterrorism. Fatfat readily replied that the reconstruction of the ISF was his highest priority. Repeating much of what Rifi had told Ambassador Crumpton earlier (septel), Fatfat said that when he took office, there were 13,000 ISF personnel. Currently, the ISF personnel level is 19,000, with expectations that this will grow to 21,500 within a year. Thus, training and equipping personnel is essential to combat terrorism. Fatfat thanked Ambassador Crumpton for USG support for Lebanon and the ISF. In turn, S/CT Crumpton congratulated the ISF on its successes, stating that, "your success is our success" and each success justified more USG resources.

¶3. (S) Ambassador Crumpton noted that, while the ISF and others seem to be doing a good job on the ground with counter-terrorism efforts, there seems to be a disconnect with the political leadership of the country. With politicians perhaps not understanding the nature of the CT threat, Ambassador Crumpton asked Fatfat's views for a truly Lebanese intelligence council which would provide guidance at the policy level. Fatfat responded that it was not needed, as intelligence was provided by various GOL entities, including the ISF. He also hinted at political differences between the various services, suggesting that an interagency council would not, in the end, be a forum for frank exchange of information. Fatfat also said that Lebanon receives the bulk of its regional intelligence from Saudi Arabia, U.A.E. and Qatar.

¶4. (S) In response to Ambassador Crumpton's question about working with Hizballah, Fatfat responded that Hizballah was

helpful with problems inside Lebanon, where it "has a Lebanese approach." But, when one looks beyond Lebanon's borders, then Hizballah is a problem, such as in dealing with regional affairs. Speaking of Hizballah's support for Hamas, Fatfat observed that if Hamas failed, something worse would take its place. He also claimed that Hamas "is not so fundamentalist now."

15. (S) Ambassador Crumpton then said that he had heard reports of Sunni discontent in northern Lebanon and that we were aware of worrying rumors of growing Sunni extremism. Fatfat replied that both he and General Rifi are Sunnis from northern Lebanon, and his own parliamentary constituency includes Tripoli. He agreed on the point of Sunni discontent, but stressed the problems were social and economic, not political. He stated that the conditions are there for extremism, but not the mind-set for extremism. While there is Sunni extremism in northern Lebanon, it is still a small, containable problem, not something widespread.

In response to Ambassador Crumpton's question about what Fatfat would recommend to combat extremism, Fatfat immediately responded: "better conditions for the Palestinians."

16. (C) S/CT Crumpton asked if Fatfat is in contact with the new government in Iraq. Fatfat said he was, but that his counterpart in the Iraqi government has not been named. Ambassador Crumpton asked for Fatfat's assistance in making the transition in Iraq successful and congratulated Fatfat for Lebanon's partnership with Jordan.

17. (C) In closing, Ambassador Crumpton brought up Fatfat, and Rifi's upcoming trip to Washington. He mentioned that DHS may coordinate the trip and it would be beneficial if Fatfat or Rifi could meet with Ambassador Negroponte. Fatfat

BEIRUT 00001682 002 OF 002

implied that it would be most useful for General Rifi to address counterterrorism, rather than himself.

FELTMAN